UNITED NATIONS **ST**

Secretariat

ST/IC/1997/83
11 December 1997

INFORMATION CIRCULAR*

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: REVISED PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM**

1. The revised Performance Appraisal System (PAS), as set out in ST/AI/1997/8, is the result of an extensive consultative process involving both staff and management. Feedback on the first year of implementation was sought from all departments and offices, as well as from staff associations, Secretariat-wide. All the views expressed were carefully considered and every effort was made to address the issues raised, while maintaining the sound principles on which the system is based.

2. Much of the feedback received focused on the need for simplification of the process, the importance of increased managerial accountability and the improvement of linkages to staff development. In response to these and other concerns raised, a shorter, simplified form has been designed to provide a format flexible enough to accommodate all occupations, ranging from routine activities of an ongoing nature to multidimensional activities with changing priorities. The revised system incorporates the following major changes:

(a) The forms and the guidelines have been significantly shortened and written in simple, straightforward language;

(b) A single form is used for both planning and appraisal;

(c) The number of steps in the process has been reduced significantly;

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* Expiration date of the present information circular: 31 December 1999.

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(d) Department and work unit plans are required to be drawn up only once every two years instead of annually, for those departments wishing to do so; individual work plans and appraisals continue to be done annually;

(e) All staff members with supervisory and/or managerial responsibilities are required to fulfil goals relating to managing performance, contributing to the development of their staff and demonstrating gender and cross-cultural responsiveness;

(f) All staff members are asked to indicate at least one professional development goal to be achieved during the reporting period, with a view to linking PAS more directly to staff development and career support;

(g) The long list of performance dimensions has been replaced by three "umbrella" dimensions taken directly from the Charter of the United Nations - competence, efficiency and integrity; additional dimensions considered important to particular jobs can be included as part of the success criteria;

(h) The mid-year review requires no written comments, except in cases where plans have changed or performance gaps exist;

(i) Numerical ratings have been replaced by narratives;

(j) A more user-friendly electronic version of the form has been developed.

3. A number of concerns raised in relation to the rating system, the rebuttal procedure and the monitoring bodies could not be addressed at this time, as those matters were the product of previous agreements reached in staff-management consultations. It should be noted, however, that establishing an effective performance management system was seen from the outset as a long-term endeavour. The implementation of the system will be kept under review, and further development and refinement may be required in the light of continuing experience.

4. It must be stressed that performance appraisal is not an end in itself, but rather one element in an overall process of performance management. The system aims to improve both individual and organizational performance by encouraging greater staff participation in the planning, delivery and evaluation of work, encouraging ongoing dialogue about performance and enhancing the responsibility and accountability of both staff and managers. The process of creating individual work plans is intended to provide staff members and supervisors with an opportunity to agree on the major responsibilities or assignments the staff member is expected to fulfil during the reporting period and on the quality and/or quantity of work expected. The exact wording or format of the plan is far less important than is achieving this mutual understanding.

5. The performance management principles on which PAS is based have been recommended for the United Nations common system by the International Civil Service Commission. This type of system, based on setting goals and performance criteria, is widely used in national civil services, as well as in many public, non-governmental and private sector organizations throughout the world. The

challenges faced in implementing PAS are similar to those faced by any large organization introducing new systems requiring significant change in the organizational culture.

6. Ultimately, effective performance management is a line management responsibility. Regardless of how well the system is designed, it will succeed only if supervisors take seriously their performance management responsibilities. At the same time, staff members also have a stake and an important role to play in ensuring successful implementation of the system. Staff are expected to prepare their performance plans in a timely manner for discussion with their supervisors, seek feedback, engage in ongoing dialogue about performance, be committed to personal development and continuous learning and actively participate in mid-year reviews and year-end appraisal discussions.

7. A full range of development programmes is being made available to staff at all levels, Secretariat-wide, to support performance management, promote continuous learning and build the skills and competencies required by all international civil servants. In addition, the Office of Human Resources Management remains committed to continuous review and improvement of policies and other mechanisms to support the long-term aim of establishing a results-based culture of performance in which the PAS system serves as an effective performance management and staff development tool.

8. The revised PAS form (P.91 (12-97)) is attached as annex I to the present report, and the Guide to the Revised Performance Appraisal System (P.91/A (12-97)) is attached as annex II. Electronic versions of the PAS form and the Guidelines are available on the OHRM-PAS bulletin board in cc:Mail. WordPerfect 6.1 and 5.1 files can be saved to your WordPerfect directory by following the instructions provided in the bulletin board message.

9. The full cooperation of all staff in this endeavour is appreciated.

ANNEX I - SAMPLE

PAS

United Nations Performance Appraisal System

LAST NAME	
FIRST NAME, MIDDLE INITIAL	
INDEX NUMBER	
DEPT/OFFICE/DIVISION/SECTION/UNIT	
FUNCTIONAL TITLE AND LEVEL	
PERFORMANCE PERIOD	
FIRST APPRAISING OFFICER	

DISCUSSION ACKNOWLEDGMENT

WORK PLAN	STAFF MEMBER'S SIGNATURE	DATE
	FIRST APPRAISING OFFICER'S SIGNATURE	DATE
MID-YEAR REVIEW	STAFF MEMBER'S SIGNATURE	DATE
	FIRST APPRAISING OFFICER'S SIGNATURE	DATE

Section A: Work plan: individual goals

What is to be accomplished	Year-end appraisal by first appraising officer
Indicate major goals and related actions. For each goal indicate how success will be determined	

Section B: Staff development goals

What is to be accomplished	Comments by first appraising officer
Indicate at least one staff development activity and related actions you intend to undertake within the performance period	

Name: _____

SECTION C: SUPERVISORY/MANAGERIAL GOALS (FOR STAFF WITH SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES)

WHAT IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED	YEAR-END APPRAISAL BY FIRST APPRAISING OFFICER
GOAL 1: MANAGE THE PERFORMANCE AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF UNDER MY SUPERVISION (INDICATE RELATED ACTIONS AND HOW SUCCESS WILL BE DETERMINED)	
GOAL 2: DEMONSTRATE GENDER AND CROSS-CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS (INDICATE RELATED ACTIONS AND HOW SUCCESS WILL BE DETERMINED)	

SECTION D: MID-YEAR REVIEW
(FIRST APPRAISING OFFICER AND STAFF MEMBER ACKNOWLEDGE MID-YEAR REVIEW BY SIGNING ON THE COVER)

COMMENTS (REQUIRED ONLY WHEN GOALS HAVE CHANGED OR WHEN PERFORMANCE DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS)

NAME: _____

SECTION E: YEAR-END APPRAISAL
(TO BE COMPLETED BY FIRST APPRAISING OFFICER)

IN ADDITION TO MAKING APPRAISALS IN SECTIONS A THROUGH C, PLEASE COMMENT ON THE STAFF MEMBER'S EFFICIENCY, COMPETENCE AND INTEGRITY IN THE PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES

FIRST APPRAISING OFFICER'S OVERALL APPRAISAL	RATING
	❒ CONSISTENTLY EXCEEDS PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS ❒ FREQUENTLY EXCEEDS PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS ❒ FULLY MEETS PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS ❒ PARTIALLY MEETS PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS ❒ DOES NOT MEET PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

FIRST APPRAISING OFFICER'S SIGNATURE DATE

SECOND APPRAISING OFFICER'S SIGNATURE DATE

SECOND APPRAISING OFFICER'S COMMENTS (OPTIONAL)

STAFF MEMBER'S SIGNATURE DATE

STAFF MEMBER'S COMMENTS (OPTIONAL)

NAME: _____

ANNEX II - SAMPLE

PAS
United Nations Performance Appraisal System

Guide to the Revised Performance Appraisal System

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This *Guide to the Revised Performance Appraisal System* is intended to complement the administrative instruction on the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) (ST/AI/1997/8). The purpose of the Guide is to assist staff and managers in implementing the PAS process by providing more detailed guidance with respect to the different components of the system.

PAS is designed to encourage a higher level of involvement and motivation by increasing staff participation in the planning, delivery and evaluation of work, with a view to improving overall organizational performance. It is based on up-front performance expectations (i.e., agreement on a work plan between staff member and supervisor), ongoing feedback with a scheduled mid-year review and a year-end appraisal. An important function of PAS is to promote communication between staff members and supervisors on the work programme, on the basis on which individual performance will be appraised, and on staff members' own professional development goals, encouraging teamwork in the process. It also places particular responsibility on staff with supervisory responsibility for a work unit to manage the performance of staff entrusted to them, to develop their staff and to demonstrate gender and cross-cultural responsiveness.

It is important to stress that PAS is not an end in itself but rather one key element in an overall performance management process in which both staff and managers have a role to play.

P.91/A (12-97) - E

PAS PROCESS OVERVIEW

STEPS IN THE PROCESS

- The supervisor develops either a one- or two-year work unit plan based on the overall department or office plan and shares it with staff . A two-year plan is suggested in order to minimize time spent in drawing up plans and to link work planning more closely to the programme budget cycle.

- The staff member develops an individual annual work plan and meets with the supervisor to discuss and establish goals and performance expectations;

- The supervisor monitors performance; the supervisor and staff member communicate throughout the performance period on progress made towards the goals and general work performance issues;

- At mid-year, the supervisor and staff member have a scheduled discussion regarding work progress. Comments are required only where expectations have changed or where performance problems are identified;

- At the end of the performance cycle, the supervisor appraises performance against the goals and expectations; the supervisor, second appraising officer and staff member each sign the completed PAS form. The second appraising officer and the staff member may make comments on the appraisal form, if desired.

WORK PLANNING

DEPARTMENT OR OFFICE AND WORK UNIT PLANNING

Heads of departments and offices develop either one- or two-year work plans based on overall Organizational goals. These plans provide the basis for work plans at the division level, which in turn help establish the goals and priorities for sections or work units, and subsequently provide direction for individual work plans.

While department, office and work unit planning may be done on a one- or two-year basis, individual work plans are developed annually. It is important that supervisors meet with the staff in their work unit, either as a group or individually, and ensure that the goals and work standards are understood by the staff. In cases where staff report to more than one supervisor, one person should be designated to oversee the PAS process, with the other supervisors providing input. Supervisors and staff members should identify and address:

- The key goals for the work unit;
- The key challenges and issues the work unit faces in meeting those goals;
- How the individual staff member's role will contribute to the work unit goals;
- Areas that the individual staff member should focus on during this performance period.

Supervisors should discuss with staff common standards or performance dimensions such as teamwork, client focus, initiative and so on, expected of all staff members of the work unit. Professional standards which apply to all staff of a particular work group should also be made clear by the supervisor.

Individual work plans

A clear understanding of the work unit's objectives and of standards expected of all members of the work unit provides a foundation for effective annual individual performance plans. The staff member's expected contribution to the work unit goals for the performance period form the basis for the individual goals and related actions to be included in the PAS form. Individual staff write up to six goals and related actions reflecting the key assignments and/or responsibilities they expect to undertake during the reporting period. It is important that individual goals are appropriate to the staff member's level and position.

Completing the form

It is important to note that the purpose of creating a work plan is for the staff member and the supervisor to agree on the major responsibilities or assignments the staff member is expected to fulfil during the reporting period and on what quality and/or quantity of work is expected. The exact wording or format of the plan is far less important than is achieving this mutual understanding.

What is to be accomplished?

Different types of goals

Staff members' goals will differ, depending on the nature of their work and level of responsibility. Some goals may reflect ongoing responsibilities, such as financial management, conducting meetings, providing translations, providing policy or legal advice, preparing position papers, doing word processing, maintaining a database and so on.

Other goals could relate to analysing and solving problems deemed important by both the supervisor and the staff member and taking action to correct them. Examples might be undertaking to improve existing internal processes and procedures or the quality of analysis, documents and papers; providing better client service, more timely responses, better coordination of efforts and so on.

Another type of goal could focus on actions to introduce changes to improve current or future work. Examples of this type of goal would be introducing, developing and implementing new ideas or concepts, processes or services.

Goals vs. work plans

The individual work plan should not be a restatement of the staff member's job description, nor should it include details on every task the staff member performs. Job descriptions outline long-term duties and responsibilities in very general terms, whereas an individual work plan should specify only the major assignments or responsibilities the staff member is expected to fulfil within a particular reporting period.

Different types of jobs

The jobs of some staff do not change much from year to year. Such staff would have goals reflecting their ongoing responsibilities. Other jobs involve a high degree of change and unpredictability. In such jobs, while the exact problems or issues that may arise during the reporting period may not be foreseen in advance, the nature of the issues and the types and quality of responses required are known. Goals for such jobs would relate to handling the assignments or projects that arise in an effective and timely way, providing high-quality analysis, solving problems, making innovations in work processes and so on. The goal section on the PAS form has been designed to allow for maximum flexibility to accommodate the varied range of job types and working environments that exist in the Organization.

How will success be determined?

For each goal, there should be an indication of how success will be determined. Criteria should be included after each goal and set of related actions in section A. Success criteria can be stated in terms of quality or calibre of work expected, the expected quantity of work, timeliness, cost effectiveness or skills or behaviours to be demonstrated. Success criteria may include standards for a specific responsibility or assignment, as well as common standards expected of all members of a work unit or professional group.

In developing success criteria, it may be useful to ask, "Who are the recipients of this product or service?" and "What quality/calibre of work is required to satisfy their needs?"

Most supervisors and staff have a clear idea of what constitutes high-quality work in their field of endeavour, as well as an idea of what type of work is not up to par. The purpose of discussing and then writing criteria in the work plan is to ensure that criteria are known in advance, that is, that both the staff member and supervisor have a common understanding of the quality and calibre of work expected, time frames or deadlines that must be observed and skills or behaviours that should be demonstrated in performing the work.

Examples: how goals may be formulated

Below are examples of different types of goals and different ways in which the work plan (section A of the form) might be completed.

Example A

Goal:

Provide timely briefing notes and talking points for the Secretary-General in relation to developments in a country/region/mission/etc.

Related actions:

- Monitor events in the region;
- Ensure that country profile databases are kept up-to-date;
- Coordinate input with other units concerned;
- Develop range of information sources and appropriate contacts;
- Anticipate developments and provide timely analysis as requested.

Success criteria:

- Timely, accurate and succinct analysis is provided;
- Analysis reflects use of current and broadest information sources;
- Quality of information and analysis provided fulfils the requirements; of, and meets with the approval of the USG, SG, or other recipient.

EXAMPLE B

GOAL: Assist in improving information flow by coordinating and processing incoming and outgoing correspondence, phone messages and e-mail.

The related actions to accomplish this goal will be to set up a correspondence log, establish an effective follow-up system, establish an e-mail routing system and organize a team approach to office phone coverage.

The success criteria will be that the correspondence log is functioning by 30 March; all correspondence will be logged within one day of receipt; all members of the team will be consulted and will reach consensus on a phone coverage system; and all office phones will be answered within two rings.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Every staff member is expected to have at least one professional development goal during the reporting period. This goal is to be included in section B of the PAS form. The goal may include special assignments, continuing education, on-the-job training, seminars, conferences, individual self-study and so on. This goal need not involve formal training, but should be interpreted broadly to include all forms of learning, including professional reading, cross-training provided by another colleague, assumption of a new task or assignment that involves learning new skills, information and so on. The action plan should indicate the skills or competencies that will be developed or enhanced by the development activity.

The supervisor and staff member should jointly decide on an appropriate staff development goal. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the development activity is realistic and achievable in the reporting period through the Organization's formal training programmes, on-the-job training, special assignments or other development and learning activities.

SUPERVISORY/MANAGERIAL GOALS

A major responsibility of staff who head departments, divisions, sections, services and units is the management of their work unit. Supervisory and managerial responsibilities should be included in section A of the PAS form as main goals of such managers and supervisors.

In addition, in order to highlight the particular responsibilities of those who supervise the work of others, all supervisors are expected to include goals on managing the performance of their staff, contributing to their staff's development and promoting a respectful and inclusive work environment. These goals are to be included in section C of the PAS form. Samples of possible actions for each goal are provided below.

GOAL 1: Manage the performance and contribute to the development of staff under my supervision

RELATED ACTIONS:

- Set objectives and complete work planning in a timely manner;
- Monitor performance of staff and provide ongoing performance feedback;
- Recognize high performance and address under-performance;
- Complete staff appraisals by established deadline;
- Identify staff development needs and encourage staff's participation in development and learning activities;
- provide on-the-job training and coaching to staff.

GOAL 2: Demonstrate gender and cross-cultural responsiveness

RELATED ACTIONS:

- Take account of the Organization's gender objectives when hiring, placing and developing staff;
- Equitably distribute responsibilities, work assignments and development opportunities;
- Promote a respectful and inclusive work environment.

WORK PLAN DISCUSSION

The supervisor is responsible for initiating the work plan discussion with each of the staff members under his or her responsibility. Staff members should come to the discussion with a prepared work plan to review with the supervisor. During the discussion, the staff member and supervisor should agree on the goals and success criteria to be used for each goal. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the staff member's goals are linked to the work unit plan and are appropriate to the staff member's level and position. The supervisor should also ensure that goals are sufficiently challenging, yet realistic, achievable and time-bound.

The supervisor and staff member also should discuss the quality and calibre of work expected, time frames or deadlines to be observed or skills and behaviours to be demonstrated so that the staff member knows how success will be determined. The meeting should include discussion of the staff member's professional development goals and supervisory/managerial goals, where appropriate. This discussion should be acknowledged on the cover of the PAS form.

MID-YEAR REVIEW

The supervisor and the staff member are required to have a scheduled mid-year review of the plan and the progress made toward achievement of the staff member's goals. This is not intended to take the place of ongoing discussions and performance feedback, which is encouraged throughout the year.

The mid-year review discussion should be acknowledged by the supervisor and the staff member by signing the front page of the PAS form in the space provided. Comments are required only when goals have changed or when performance does not meet expectations. Changes in assignments or priorities, or remedial action proposed to meet performance gaps, should be noted in section D of the form.

YEAR-END PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

YEAR-END APPRAISAL

The first appraising officer completes the year-end appraisal by commenting on the extent to which the staff member has achieved the goals set and met the success criteria, taking into account any unforeseen developments during the reporting period that may have affected on performance. Goals may be treated as a group or individually. In cases where the staff member has had more than one supervisor, the designated first appraising officer should seek input from the other supervisors.

COMMENTS ON EFFICIENCY, COMPETENCE AND INTEGRITY

In order to take into account the way in which goals have been achieved, first appraising officers are requested to comment on the staff member's efficiency, competence and integrity in the performance of their functions. These dimensions are drawn from Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations.

OVERALL YEAR-END PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The overall appraisal and rating should be determined taking into account the extent to which goals have been achieved, the degree to which success criteria have been met and the manner in which results have been achieved, as indicated in section E. The first appraising officer will assign one of the following five ratings:

FULLY MEETS PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS. This assessment describes performance that fully meets all the goals or success criteria in the work plan. The majority of staff will earn this rating, which represents entirely satisfactory performance in carrying out the goals and tasks of the Organization. This represents the fully acceptable level of performance for the position and is the standard or norm for the position.

FREQUENTLY EXCEEDS PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS. A rating of frequently exceeds performance expectations means that performance frequently exceeded what was expected for the position. Performance at this level should be regarded as unusual. This rating reflects high levels of quality, quantity or timeliness of work. Generally, performance will be higher for some goals than others. Supervisors need to provide clear supporting examples to explain why this rating is appropriate, with specific attention to how the staff member's actions and the results of those actions contributed to a greater degree than expected to organizational goals.

CONSISTENTLY EXCEEDS PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS. By definition, only a few people, items, actions, designs, and the like can be considered exceptional in any endeavour. A rating of consistently exceeds performance expectations is characterized not only by achieving the goals for the position, but by going *well beyond* those normally expected for the job. The individual may also have accepted a special assignment or additional responsibilities outside of the specific purview of the position. Performance at this level contributes to significant outcomes that advance the work of the unit as a whole. Performance results in this category are recognized within the work group and unit as exceptional and clearly exceeding the goals for the position in all respects. This rating, because it reflects exceptional performance, *must be especially well supported by statements of the specific actions and the results of those actions in terms of their contributions to organizational goals.*

PARTLY MEETS PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS. This rating describes performance that meets some goals but that still does not meet enough of the success criteria of the work plan. Additional, higher-quality or more timely outputs are needed. For staff given this rating, the supervisor must ensure a more comprehensive work and performance plan for the upcoming year. The plan should include specific and appropriate remedial training or development plan, more frequent reviews and closer assessment of progress made in areas identified as needing improvement. *Supervisors should provide specific examples of where the staff member's performance needs improvement, as well as instances of clear improvement.*

At the end of the performance year, if performance still needs improvement, examples should be cited in the comments sections of the final appraisal. If performance problems continue, the supervisor should propose corrective actions after appropriate consultation.

DOES NOT MEET PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS. This assessment means performance has not met the performance expectations articulated in the work plan for the performance period. Indications of such performance include:

- Quality of the work reflects serious shortcomings, or the quantity produced falls well short of the goals that have been established, and the results are inadequate after consideration of any relevant circumstances beyond the individual's control;
- Failure to complete significant assignments properly or to meet deadlines, which results in a serious negative consequence in meeting the work unit's goals;
- A continued lack of achievement of goals in spite of documented reviews with the supervisor; and/or
- Performance affects the work of others to the point of being detrimental to achievement of the work unit's goals.

This rating indicates serious reservations as to the staff member's overall ability to contribute towards achieving unit goals. In such cases, there needs to be a proactive approach by managers, who must document the under-performance and work with the staff member to develop a performance improvement plan. Continued under-performance should result in appropriate sanctions.

RATING DECISIONS

The PAS rating system is not intended to impose a mandatory bell curve. There is not a predetermined rating distribution. Nevertheless, experience with many similar organizations indicates that when staff are honestly and appropriately appraised, the vast majority are found to have fully met expectations, while the number of staff who have consistently exceeded expectations or who have not adequately met expectations would naturally be small.

Therefore, it is anticipated that not more than 5 per cent on average, across the whole Secretariat, will qualify for a rating of "consistently exceeds performance expectations". Some 10 per cent might be expected to receive a rating of "frequently exceeds performance expectations", while approximately 5 per cent may fall below "fully meets performance expectations". In all cases, assessment ratings must be explained by comments, including illustrations or examples as needed. For ratings other than "fully meets performance expectations", supervisors' comments must include examples of the work performed or not performed that justify the rating.